

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5115
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 17380

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLO, XF, UR
SUBJECT: GROMYKO AND SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM
EXCHANGE SPEECHES

SUMMARY: GROMYKO-KHADDAM EXCHANGE OF LUCHEON SPEECHES
REVEALS FIRST OFFICIAL SOVIET STATEMENT ON SADAT'S RECENT
POLICY INITIATIVES. NEITHER FOREIGN MINISTER MENTIONS
TRIPOLI MEETING OF REJECTION STATES, AN EVENT WHICH MAY BE
GIVING SOVIET POLICY MAKERS SOME LAST MINUTE QUALMS. END
SUMMARY.

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1. NOV. 30 PRAVDA CARRIES TASS REPORT ON FIRST ROUND OF
TALKS BETWEEN GROMYKO AND SYRIAN FON. MIN. KHADDAM
AND ON EXCHANGE OF NOV. 29 LUCHEON SPEECHES. TALKS
ARE DESCRIBED AS TALKING PLACE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF
"MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING" AND AS INVOLVING A "THOROUGH
EXCHANGE OF OPINIONS" ON QUESTIONS CONCERNING A

MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT AND BILATERAL COOPERATION.

2. ASSUME DEPT. HAS TASS REPORT ITSELF. EMBASSY SEES SIGNIFICANCE IN FOLLOWING POINTS OF GROMYKO'S SPEECH:

-- GROMYKO' CRITICAL REMARKS ON SADAT'S RECENT POLICY INITIATIVES REPRESENT FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENT BY ANY SOVIET OFFICIAL SINCE SADAT'S DECISION TO GO TO JERUSALEM;

-- AS SUCH, THE LINE OF HIS CRITICISM IS NOT UNUSUAL AND WAS FORESHADOWED BY SOVIET MEDIA MATERIAL AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. WHAT IS INTERESTING IS THE RELATIVE RESTRAINT WHICH GROMYKO SHOWED. HE DID NOT, FOR EXAMPLE, NAME SADAT, EGYPT, "THE IMPERIALISTS", OR THE U.S. IN HIS REMARKS. HE DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION EITHER THE CAIRO OR THE TRIPOLI CONFERENCES NOR DID HE MENTION THE PLO. HE EMPHASIZED THE ON-GOING NATURE OF SOVIET CONSULTATIONS WITH REGARD TO GENEVA AND HE RESERVED JUDGMENT WITH REGARD TO "FINAL CONCLUSIONS" ON FATE OF GENEVA CONFERENCE;

-- ON A MORE NEGATIVE NOTE, HE DID STATE THAT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WAS IN A MORE DIFFICULT POSITION
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THAN IT HAD BEEN EARLIER AND HE DID WARN OF THE "SERIOUS RESPONSIBILITY" BORNE BY "THOSE" EITHER NEAR (READ EGYPT AND ISRAEL) OR FAR (READ THE U.S.) FROM THE ME.E. WHO UNDERTAKE STEPS WHICH CREATE DIFFICULTIES FOR CONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.

3. KHADDAM'S REPORTED REMARKS WERE SOMEWHAT LESS RESTRAINED ALTHOUGH HE ALSO AVOIDED NAMING THE OBVIOUS TARGETS OF HIS CRITICISM AND HE ALSO RESERVED FINAL JUDGMENT ON THE CURRENT PROSPECTS FOR CONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. IN GENERAL KHADDAM'S EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE TO AND SOLIDARITY WITH THE SOVIET UNION AS WELL AS HIS CRITICISM OF THOSE WHO "ATTEMPT TO SPOIL SOVIET-ARAB RELATIONS" SEEMED TO GO BEYOND THE NEEDS OF THE IMMEDIATE SITUATION. WHETHER THIS REFLECTS AN EXAMPLE OF SYRIAN FLATTERY, A RECEIVED NEED BY KHADDAM TO DEMONSTRATE TO HIS OWN CRITICS THE STRENGTH OF SOVIET-SYRIAN POLITICAL RELATIONS, OR AN ACHIEVEMENT OF SOME TANGIBLE INCREASE IN SOVIET ECONOMIC OR MILITARY ASSISTANCE IS NOT YET KNOWN. WE DO NOTE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE "NORMAL" DESCRIPTION OF THE TALKS THEMSELVES (PARA 1) AND THE

FULSOME CONTENT OF KHADDAM'S SPEECH. SOME WESTERN DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS HERE HAVE SPECULATED THAT THIS INDICATES THE TALKS DID NOT GO NOV. 30 ENTIRELY SMOOTHLY.

4. NEXT ON THE AGENDA IS KHADDAM'S MEETING WITH BREZHNEV. KHADDAM TOLD THE ARAB AMBASSADORS ON NOV. 29 (AS GROMYKO HAD SAID AT LUNCH) THAT THE SOVIETS SAID THIS MEETING WOULD BE "VERY IMPORTANT" BUT HE DID NOT REVEAL OR INDICATE THAT HE HAD ANY FURTHER INSIGHT. THE ARAB AMBASSADORS WERE ALSO TOLD THAT THE SYRIANS HAD FORMED THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS PLANNED TO "DO MORE" FOR THE PLO. WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN WAS ALSO NOT SPELLED OUT.

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